

Downtown Providence District Management Authority

Operations Committee Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2006 2pm

Board Members present: Mike Corso, Joe DiBattista, Robert Gagliardi, and Chris Placco. Others present: Francisco Ramirez, Providence Department of Public Works; Dan Baudouin, Providence Foundation; Frank LaTorre, DID Director of Public Space; Leslie Huikko, DID Office Manager, Frank Zammarelli, Operations Manager for Block-By-Block.

1. Sidewalk repairs by the State

Existing conditions drawings have been completed by RIDOT. A walk-around will be scheduled to take place between June 6th and 9th to prioritize the areas of the sidewalk to be replaced on the 6 designated streets. All are welcome to attend. Phase 1 of the project will consist of the areas that are simpler fixes, and Phase 2 will include the more difficult areas, including those with vaults, etc. Work will begin in Spring 2007 due to the bidding and other necessary administrative processes through RIDOT. The project is being funded by federal ADA accessibility funds & pedestrian improvement funds. If we are diligent and persistent, we may be successful in securing a \$2 million allocation over 2 years.

A suggestion was made to approach property owners for financial contributions toward the project. If the goal is to establish uniformity,

property owners might be willing to bear some of the financial burden to ensure that sidewalks on entire streets can be replaced, as opposed to fixing only sections of the sidewalk on each street.

A brief discussion followed regarding repairs to the streets and sidewalks after utility work is completed. Francisco Ramirez expressed that he shares the Committee's concern regarding the requirement to replace removed surfaces with the exact same material. The City is in the process of developing a process to better enforce this ordinance. Those present agreed that there needs to be a shorter deadline for restoring areas that have been repaired and consistent enforcement. Francisco suggested that the DID e-mail him if there are specific areas of concern. It was suggested that there be written communication from the City to the utility companies so that they are aware of the conditions of the ordinance, as well as the increased effort to enforce it. Frank LaTorre will write a similar letter to reinforce the City's efforts. Francisco will coordinate additional communication at the building permit level to insure the City is notifying the contractor of its responsibilities.

2. Groundwork Providence flower plantings

The Block-By-Block Special Projects team is putting the finishing touches on the planters. Thirty-nine (39) have been re-built and re-stained and will be returned to the street in the near future. Thomas Brendler, Executive Director of GWP, has the master plan for returning planters to the street. On Thursday, May 11, a press

conference will be held at Parcel 12, where the City will present the soil it is donating to the project. A GroundWork Providence Board member is contributing \$5,000-\$10,000, which allows the plan for 3 plantings throughout the year to be carried out. The hanging basket program will begin in June.

3. Downtown tree survey update from the City Forester

Doug Still is working to complete the survey of downtown trees as soon as possible. The city-wide survey is scheduled to be completed by fall 2006. This will allow the DID to coordinate its donated plantings during fiscal year 2007.

4. Improving street lighting

A walk through downtown took place on April 26 at 7:30pm for the purpose of assessing the streetlight situation. The group included Joe and Laurie DiBattista, Frank LaTorre, Dan Baudouin, and Ed Shore. All present were struck by the vast improvement that is needed to make the area safer and more inviting at night. Joe spoke with the Mayor about his concerns, and the Mayor is aware of and sensitive to the fact there is inadequate street lighting. To that end, he is forming a committee to work toward improving the streetlight situation. The committee will be chaired by Garry Bliss and will include the DID. It was noted that some of the financial burden belongs to the City and some is the responsibility of property owners.

Frank LaTorre will speak with Councilwoman Balbina Young, who

spear-headed a successful lighting project on Broad Street near St. Joseph's Hospital, to gain insights as to how this effort was coordinated and funded.

5. Smoking butlers

Frank LaTorre presented information on several models of smoking butlers. The Committee agreed that the previously-allocated \$2,000 should be spent on the GroundsKeeper Smoking Management Receptacle model 2570-88. Placement of these receptacles will be predicated on those areas with the greatest need.

6. Updates from Frank Zammarelli, Operations Manager

The consistently warmer weather has allowed the Special Projects team to focus on mulching tree wells, pressure-washing sidewalks, removing graffiti and painting. The DID performed a one-time graffiti removal project at Water Place Park because the problem was so severe and the Parks Department was not equipped to address it. The project took a week, and the results are noticed and appreciated by many. Frank LaTorre is working with the Mayor and the Parks Department to advocate for adequate police patrols/surveillance of the area, as well as the purchase of equipment and training of staff to handle this on-going issue. Inasmuch as Water Place Park is outside the district, the DID will not be purchasing equipment or supplying staff on an on-going basis.

According to the DID graffiti removal agreement, Block-By-Block staff

are responsible only for graffiti removal that is on the ground level and/or able to be reached without the use of special equipment. While the Committee agrees that the services provided must be consistent, they acknowledge that there are some situations where assessment of removal feasibility would be at the discretion of Frank Zammarelli, as he is the only OSHA-trained lift operator on staff. A suggestion was made to research professional companies that provide graffiti-removal services, so that a referral can be made when the DID receives a work request that is outside of our scope of service.

7. Other Business

Frank LaTorre submitted a request for funding from the Community Development Block Grant for trash receptacles. At last report, it looked as if \$40,000 would be awarded. Councilwoman Balbina Young was praised for her role in advocating for this funding. A final decision should be made soon and the results will be reported at the full DPDMA Board meeting on May 18th.

Note: The Congress for the New Urbanism will be hosting a conference downtown from June 1-4 that will take place at the Convention Center and at the Cornish property on Westminster. This weekend is also RISD's graduation, so the downtown area will be very busy.